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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8180  
INFO RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA IMMEDIATE 0091  
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHML/NAVCRRMINVSRVRA MANILA RP//FEMQ// IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 003051

SIPDIS

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FOR EAP/MTS AND INR/EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2017

TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: AMNESTY FOR COMMUNIST INSURGENTS

REF: A. MANILA 2965

[B](#). MANILA 2327

[C](#). MANILA 1099

Classified By: Ambassador Kenney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: In an effort to undermine the Philippine Communist Party and its military wing, President Gloria Arroyo announced a broad amnesty plan for Philippine Communists September 7. At the same time, legal proceedings got underway in the Netherlands against Jose Maria "Joma" Sison, the founder of the main Philippine communist party arrested by Dutch authorities August 28 for ordering the execution of several Filipino compatriots. President Arroyo's amnesty offer to rank-and-file radicals is in line with her recent pledge in a national speech to resolve the brutal, long-running communist and Muslim insurgencies before the end of her term in 2010. The president said the amnesty was essential to attaining peace and stability, but did not specifically mention restarting peace talks with the communists insurgents, which stalled in 2004.

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CURRENT SITUATION  
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[2](#). (SBU) Sison founded the breakaway Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA), in 1969. Since that time, the military arm has waged guerrilla warfare along Maoist lines, causing as many as 40,000 casualties over the years, particularly during the Marcos era. Peace talks between the government and the communist organizations stalled in 2004, when the communists walked out to protest the inclusion of the New People's Army on U.S. and European lists of terrorist groups.

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AMNESTY AND REINTEGRATION  
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[3](#). (C) The amnesty plan would cover acts of rebellion and crimes committed "in pursuit of political beliefs." It would also restore civil and political rights for the communist groups, which continue to clash with Philippine forces, killing dozens in the past year (ref b and c). However, the amnesty would not apply to non-combat felonies, such as murder, kidnapping, and drug trafficking. That distinction would preclude amnesty for a significant number of communist units that function as hit-and-run bandit groups to blackmail corporations and carry out kidnap for ransom. The Philippine government plans to provide economic incentives -- including

USD \$10 million for economic programs to provide employment for reintegrated communists -- to pave the way for the rebels' return to what Arroyo called "a peaceful, democratic and pluralistic society."

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THE SISON FACTOR  
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14. (SBU) So far Philippine officials have said the amnesty would not affect the Dutch criminal case against Sison, whom the Philippine government has been pursuing for decades. Philippine authorities jailed Sison from 1977-86 for subversion and rebellion; Sison fled to the Netherlands in 1988, where he sought political asylum and has remained. Dutch authorities arrested Sison in the Netherlands on August 28 on charges that Sison, while in the Netherlands, ordered the execution of three Filipinos who were connected to the NPA in the period 2003-2006.

15. (C) While the three murder charges represent just a fraction of the charges that the Philippine armed forces have suggested against Sison, the Philippine government will likely not seek Sison's extradition. Two Philippine Department of Justice prosecutors told post that from the perspective of the Philippine government, it was better that Sison was remained in detention in the Netherlands because his detention in the Philippines might have prompted larger demonstrations. In addition, according to these officials, a conviction would be swifter and more likely in the Netherlands, where he could serve life.

16. (C) The relatively muted response so far by the Philippine communists and the NPA suggests that Sison's

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influence has waned during his self-imposed exile. While Philippine authorities were taken off-guard by the timing of Sison's arrest, so far Philippine Communists have been unable to mount any large-scale protests. Philippine authorities have easily managed the few small-scale demonstrations that have taken place, but remain cautious because of an impending decision as early as September 12 in another high-profile legal case -- the corruption charges against former President Estrada -- which could cause wider unrest (ref a).

17. (C) Comment: President Arroyo's stated goal is to neutralize the NPA and reintegrate its members by the end of her term in 2010. Media reports have claimed Sison's arrest and President Arroyo's amnesty offer will weaken the NPA's recruitment efforts. While Sison was not normally an operational leader, he did help inspire Philippine Communists, and his arrest may indeed help deflate the organization. The amnesty plan may do the same, while giving the Philippine government more traction in pulling the communist groups back to the negotiating table. At the same time, the Philippine government may simultaneously continue to escalate efforts to capture and try unrepentant rebel leaders, following the strategy it pursued with Muslim insurgents, who were offered livelihood programs and other reintegration incentives while the threat of military action continued.

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KENNEY